

REPORT

OF THE

SUPERINTENDING

SCHOOL COMMITTEE

OF

AMHERST, N. H.,

FOR THE

Year ending March 4, 1859.

PRINTED AT THE CABINET OFFICE.

REPORT.

The Superintending School Committee, having attended to the duties assigned them, are happy to state that there has been, for a few years past, a gradual, yet very perceptible, improvement in most of our town schools. Several new school houses have been erected, and some of the old ones repaired, so that the comfort of the scholars, as well as their facilities for study, has been much improved. Parents also have apparently taken a deeper interest in the subject of education, and encouraged their children by more frequently attending the examinations of the schools, besides occasionally visiting them at other times. New and improved school books, recently prepared by experienced teachers and other literary men, have been gradually introduced, and in this way the means of instruction have in many respects been greatly facilitated. In some cases the District Committees have been more careful in the selection and employment of teachers, and required higher qualifications, both moral and intellectual, on the part of those to whose government and instruction their children are committed. And not a few of the scholars, encouraged by these changes for the better, have appeared in some degree to appreciate the advantages thus enjoyed, and have made corresponding improvement in their studies and general deportment.

The labor of superintendence has been divided, one member of the Committee taking charge of the Summer, and the other of the Winter schools.

With these introductory remarks your Committee respectfully submit to the inhabitants of the town of Amherst, their Annual Report of the several schools of which they have had the superintendence the year past.

DISTRICT No. 1. This District having adopted the Somersworth Act is here reported by its own Committee.

PRIMARY SCHOOL, under the instruction of Miss Frances E. Sargent, of Milford. First Term commenced April 26th, and closed July 2d,—length, 10 weeks; number of scholars, 56; average attendance, 47; wages, \$20.00 per month, including board.

Second Term, commenced August 30th, closed Nov. 29th—length, 12 weeks; number of scholars, 45; average attendance, 38; wages, as above. The labors of Miss Sargent have been followed by the same cheering progress which has marked her previous instructions. The school was large, but good order, punctuality and steady improvement have marked the exercises of the pupils. The scholars are all young, yet they were interested in the exercises of the school-room, happy to meet their teacher, regular and attentive to their studies. At the closing examination, the Committee were gratified with the unmistakable evidence of wholesome moral influence and instruction. Cheerfulness, good order and improvement were manifest in the recitations and deportment of the pupils. We seldom witness so pleasing a spectacle.

INTERMEDIATE SCHOOL, taught by Miss Mary J. Batchelder, of Mont Vernon. First Term, commenced April 26th, and closed July 3d—length 10 weeks; number of scholars, 46; average attendance, 35; wages, \$20.00 per month.

Second Term, commenced Aug. 30th, and closed Nov. 19th—length, 12 weeks; number of scholars, 47; average attendance, 35; wages, as before. It is not easy, in few words, to offer a fair presentation of the condition and progress of these schools. Miss Batchelder has experience and skill in teaching, and several classes made fair improvement, yet the school was not in all respects satisfactory. The same faults, of disorder and irregularity, which have been censured in previous reports, were again apparent, and the best endeavors of the teacher only partially secured their correction. While we cordially approve of Miss Batchelder's faithful endeavors, we wish to say, that unless parents give their influence to sustain the laws of the school, difficulties will arise for which no teacher can be held responsible.

HIGH SCHOOL. Taught by Mr. Edmund S. Hoyt, of Warner. The First Term commenced Sept. 27th, and closed Dec. 3d—length, 10 weeks; number of scholars, 35; average attendance, 31; wages \$45 per month. Second Term commenced Dec. 13th, and closed Feb. 18th—length, 10 weeks; number of scholars, 41; average attendance, 36; wages, as before. Mr. Hoyt has some excellent qualifications for a teacher. Prompt and accurate, his instructions in reading, grammar and arithmetic were clear and well illustrated. In maintaining order, neatness and good manners, he was not equally successful. By part of the scholars the time was well improved, but others made but little progress. The fault in this, and in the Intermediate school, must not all be laid to

the teachers. It was a mistake, we think, in Mr. Hoyt, to yield so much to the wishes of the scholars at the commencement of the term ; but in this he was encouraged by parents and the sentiment of many in the District. And this naturally leads to the inquiry, whether the higher aims of education, and the true intent of the public school system, have not been defeated, by the fallacious notion that teachers and Committees must seek the favor of the scholars. In a word, that the interests of education are to be promoted by making the school popular. Under this influence scholars are petted, and become disrespectful and insubmissive ; and scarcely any degree of intellectual progress can compensate for these evils. Under this treatment a few scholars may be stimulated to a fair improvement, but the true standard of study is lowered, and the best interests of the school sacrificed. While the existing sentiment prevails, the interposition of the Committee and the dismissal of some disorderly members will not remedy the evil ; indeed, the necessity of dismissing any scholars is what we especially wish to avoid. Let parents regard the school room as a place for the training of their children in knowledge and virtue. Let them inculcate obedience to the instructors and respect for the superiors of their children. Let them avoid condemning either teachers or Committees before a personal conference with them. Let them encourage all concerned in maintaining an elevated standard of scholarship and deportment, and a change would soon be manifest. We should not be mortified and disappointed by those outbreaks of disorder which now reproach us. The graded school might become a model school—a center of attraction to all our youth. And never will this result be secured, until parents regard study and good manners as of more importance than pastimes and evening entertainments. We speak at length and seriously of these things, from a deep conviction that the higher departments of the school are not accomplishing what we ought to expect.

J. G. DAVIS, for the Committee.

DISTRICT NO. 2. *Summer School*, taught by Miss Fannie M. Moore. Length of the term, 9 weeks ; whole number of scholars, 21 : average attendance, 15 ; wages of teacher, including board, \$15.00 per month. This school has been gradually improving for several years. At the examination the general appearance both of the teacher and scholars was good. In reading, however, the improvement did not appear to have been quite so great as in some other branches of study.

Winter School, taught by Miss Mary J. Worcester, of Hollis, commenced Dec. 6th, and closed Feb. 25th—length of term, 12 weeks ; number of scholars, 22 ; average attendance, 19 ; wages, \$20.33 per month. The same excellencies which marked Miss Worcester's instructions last year, were manifest again in securing good order and steady improvement. Reading and spelling received the attention which these branches deserve. In other studies there was evidence of diligence and regularity. It is to be regretted that all the children in the district of suitable age, cannot be induced to attend school.

DISTRICT No. 3. *Summer School*, taught by Miss Maria A. Caldwell. Length of term, 8 weeks ; whole number of scholars, 10 ; average attendance, 9 ; wages of teacher, \$14.68 per month. This school was too small to afford the teacher an opportunity to show her qualifications or do herself justice. However, the employment of Miss Caldwell in the same district for several years in succession, is enough to show the estimation in which she is held, and to suggest the inquiry whether it is always true that "a prophet is without honor save in his own country."

Winter School, taught by Mr. Reuben Calef, commenced Nov. 29th, and closed Feb. 12th—length of term, 12 weeks ; number of scholars, 13 ; average attendance, 11 ; wages, \$24.00 per month. This school appeared well at the examination. The classes in grammar and spelling answered with accuracy and promptness. Good proficiency in penmanship. With the exception of tardiness, the deportment of the scholars was commendable.

DISTRICT No. 4. *Summer School*, taught by Miss Susan R. Patch. Length of term, 10 weeks ; whole number of scholars, 13 ; average attendance, 11 ; wages of the teacher, \$12.00 per month. This was Miss Patch's first school, but her appearance was good, and she promises to make a good teacher. The school appeared well at the examination, but had some of the oldest scholars spoken loud enough to have been heard distinctly, it would have appeared much better.

Winter School, taught by Miss S. Maria Smith, commenced Nov. 29th and closed Feb. 5th—length of term, 10 weeks ; number of scholars, 19 ; average attendance, 14 ; wages, \$19.00 per month. Miss Smith has energy and tact. Several of the scholars were young, but these manifested improvement in all the branches of study except grammar. Writing books well filled and neat, order good, and more than the average punctuality.

DISTRICT No. 5. *Summer School*, taught by Miss Rhoda A. Wheeler of Merrimack. Length of term, 18 weeks ; whole number of scholars, 20 ; average attendance, 14 ; wages of teacher, \$15.00 per month.—This has long been one of our better schools, and it is hoped it will continue to sustain that character. The teacher and scholars appeared well at the close of it. The absence of several of the larger and more advanced girls who had formerly attended, however, rendered the examination less interesting than it has been on some former occasions.

Winter School, taught by Miss Sophia E. Phelps, commenced Oct. 26, and closed Feb. 9th—length of term, 12 weeks ; number of scholars, 25 ; average attendance, 20 ; wages, \$18.00 per month. Contrary to our previous observations, the improvement of the younger scholars was relatively greatest. Miss Phelps sought the improvement of her pupils, who are not deficient in talent, but she found it difficult to awaken the enthusiasm which we delight to see in the school-room. From the record of 139 instances of tardiness, and 64 dismissals, we infer that the

teacher was not in fault, but that the duties of the school room have been crowded aside by other engagements. Will parents judge of the merits of this opinion.

DISTRICT No. 6. *Summer School*, taught by Miss Charlotte M. Nichols of Merrimack. Length of term, 9 weeks ; whole number of scholars, 18 ; average attendance, 10 ; wages of the teacher, \$14.00 per month. The government of this school was good. Everything seemed to be done in order. The reading was highly commendable, and two or three of the oldest girls did themselves much credit when the school was examined.

Winter School, taught by Mr. Altamont Thompson, of East Lempster. Commenced Nov. 1st, and closed Jan. 7—length, 10 weeks ; number of scholars, 16 ; average attendance, 13 ; wages, \$32.00 per month. The exercises of this school were marked by regularity and thoroughness. The Register presents a good report of attendance and deportment. In reading, spelling and arithmetic the advancement of the scholars deserves special notice. Writing books neatly kept and well filled.

DISTRICT No. 7. *Summer School*, taught by Miss Sarah M. Parker. Length of the term, 16 weeks ; whole number of scholars, 13 ; average attendance, 11 ; wages of teacher, \$15.00 per month. Miss Parker is an experienced instructress, and the good appearance of her school at the close of it well sustained the character which she had formerly acquired.

Winter School, taught by Mr. Leonard Brown. Commenced Nov. 17th, and closed Feb. 24th—length, 14 weeks ; number of scholars, 15 ; average attendance, 11 ; wages, \$28.00 per month. A part of the scholars were necessarily detained at home on the day of the examination. The recitations of those present were creditable alike to teacher and scholars. The writing books presented clean and promising specimens of penmanship. It is very desirable to have schools continue under the care of well-chosen teachers from year to year. In this respect the children of this district have been favored, and most of them have proved that they were sensible of their advantages.

DISTRICT No. 8. *Summer School*, taught by Miss Elizabeth Kendall of Mont Vernon. Length of the term, 9 weeks ; whole number of scholars, 23 ; average attendance 20 ; wages of the teacher, \$14.50 per month. This school has been gradually improving for several years.—And it is praise enough to say of Miss Kendall, that at the close of the summer term she was readily employed to teach the winter school also.

Winter School, continued under the care of Miss Kendall. Commenced Nov. 1st, and closed Jan. 7th—length, 10 weeks ; number of scholars, 27 ; average attendance, 24 ; wages, \$21.00 per month. This school has improved very much under the instruction of Miss Kendall, who has evidently secured the respect and affection of all the scholars. In reading and recitation the scholars spoke with more distinctness than

at previous examinations, and the tone of the other exercises evinced a better understanding of their studies. It is not creditable to the boys, that their companions of the other sex should be their superiors in promptness and regularity of attendance.

DISTRICT No. 9. *Summer School*, taught by Miss Annie E. Fairfield of New Boston. Length of term, 8 weeks; whole number of scholars, 21; average attendance, 17; wages of the teacher, \$14,00 per month. Here the parents appear to take an interest in the school. Its examination was well attended by them, and the children by their neat appearance, their respectful deportment, and their general improvement in study, did themselves much credit. But it is to be regretted that one of the best schools in town should have one of the poorest school-houses.

Winter School, taught by Mr. James Dodge, of Goffstown. Commenced Nov. 29th, and closed Feb. 5th—length, 10 weeks; number of scholars, 28; average attendance, 26; wages, \$35,00 per month. This school makes an excellent report for regularity; several scholars having attended every exercise. The teacher has experience and industry, and all classes sharing his attention, the result was a good school. Mr. Dodge deserves the esteem in which he is held as a teacher.

DISTRICT No. 10. Two terms in succession, under the care of Miss Clara H. Read, of Merrimack. School commenced Oct. 4th, and ended, having one week of vacation, Feb. 12th—length, 18 weeks; number of different scholars, 12; average attendance, 9; wages, \$16,00 per month. The inequalities of age and attainments makes any classification of the scholars impracticable. Most of the number were diligent in their studies, and some of the recitations at examination unusually good. Without the advantages of previous experience, Miss Reed secured the approbation of her employers.

DISTRICTS Nos. 11, 12, and 13. The scholars in these districts attend school in Bedford and Merrimack. Whole number, 13.

DISTRICT No. 14. *Summer School*, taught by Miss Almira E. Upton. Length of term, 8 weeks; whole number of scholars, 11; average attendance, 10; wages of the teacher, \$3,00 per month. Good order was kept in this school. The writing-books appeared well. The spelling was good. And everything showed that Miss Upton had been a successful teacher. And if there was any defect in the appearance or deportment of the scholars, it was a want of respectful attention to those older than themselves.

Winter School, taught by Miss Martha Ober. Commenced Nov. 5th, and closed Feb. 25th—length, 14 weeks; number of scholars, 19; average attendance, 17; wages, \$20,00 per month. In deportment and regularity of attendance, the habits of the scholars have decidedly improved. The recitations at examination evinced a lively interest in study, without any attempts at display, the exercises were creditable to both teacher and scholars. Miss Ober has facility and tact in the discharge of her duties, and the result of her endeavors was a profitable school.

We have endeavored to present an impartial Report of of the condition and prospects of the schools under our care. From this survey and other sources it appears, that the whole number of scholars in town is 442 ; attending school, 397 ; average attendance, 323 ; length of Summer schools in weeks, 141, of Winter schools, 138—total, 279 ; at a cost of \$1521,80.

The general adoption of the series of Lowell writing books, is attended by a gratifying improvement in penmanship. The practice of vocal music has also contributed to the attractions of the school room, often furnishing an agreeable and profitable recreation. In some districts the Committee have found it difficult to repress the ambition of the scholars to enter on advanced studies. To pass from Colburn to Adams in Arithmetic, or from Tower to Weld in Grammar, is of no advantage, unless the pupil is prepared to profit by the transition. Thorough training in the elements affords the only sure ground of intellectual progress. We hope the suggestion respecting maps for the school room, in last year's Report, will be adopted in every district. Perhaps some friends of Education will show their benevolence by supplying this destitution.

We regard it as a promising sign that parents visit the schools more frequently than they did. The character of our schools depends much on the sentiment which parents create. If they are intent upon having schools of a high order, the end will almost certainly be attained. Two or three families, heartily enlisted, can produce great changes for the better in any neighborhood. And what object more worthy of their attention? The public school is the most important local interest of each district. Why should it not be enriched by the attentions and guardianship of all who value knowledge and religion? We hope to find parents conferring with teachers and seconding their endeavors in the work of Education. We are confident that great advances are yet to be made in this cause, and those who employ themselves judiciously to promote the intellectual and moral welfare of the young, are public benefactors.

S. WHITE, } *Superintending*
J. G. DAVIS, } *Committee.*